communicating to a data center the presence of the signal indicating a weak nonvolatile memory.

8. The method recited in claim 5, including the step of:

communicating to a service center the presence of a signal indicating a weak nonvolatile memory.

9. The method recited in claim 5, including the steps of:

establishing a communication link with a data center to communicate the existence of a signal indicating a weak nonvolatile memory to the data center; and

communicating the existence of a weak nonvolatile memory to a service center.

10. The method recited in claim 5, wherein:

the predetermined data field occupies more than one discrete area of the nonvolatile memory.

11. The method recited in claim 5, including the steps of:

reading the data present in the oldest normal data field of the nonvolatile memory;

generating a signal indicating that the nonvolatile memory is weak in the absence of a reading from the oldest normal data field.

12. A method for determining when an electronic postage meter has a weak nonvolatile memory, comprising the steps of:

establishing a constant value;

reading a predetermined field of data within a nonvolatile memory having a plurality of fields of data;

comparing the reading obtained from the predetermined field of data with the constant value;

generating a signal as a result of the comparing step if the reading obtained from the predetermined field of data fails to correspond with the constant value;

storing the signal resulting from the generating step in one of the fields of data other than the predetermined field of data;

communicating the existence of the stored signal to a data center;

erasing the data in the predetermined field of data subsequent to the comparing step; and

writing the constant value into the predetermined field of data subsequent to the erasing step.

13. The method recited in claim 12, including the steps of:

communicating the existence of the stored signal from the data center to a service center.

14. The method recited in claims 12 or 13 wherein: the plurality of fields of data include normal data fields, including the steps of:

reading the oldest normal data field;

generating a signal indicating that the nonvolatile memory is weak in the absence of a reading from the oldest normal data field.

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